

123 We had hardly gained the base of the rock when we heard human voices and soon came up with three men and their dogs. One fellow [411] carried a gun, the others had axes hitched to their shoulders. They [412] were on their way to a devil dancing ceremony at a house of illness some miles away; but abandoning their project they accompanied us to their homes.

[621] In a small clearing stood half a dozen leafy shelters. Outside one of [342] these, three women with infants at the breast were seated roasting small yellow flowers. The rest of their people were at work on a *chena*\* close [162] by. We summoned them and soon we had all the Veddas of the *Kosgaha* [164] *Ulpotta* before us—some six or eight men and about a dozen women and children. They were a poor lot bearing the stigmata of malaria and [146] *framboesia*. There was but one old man among them. The children were emaciated and languid.

144 Most of them showed strong traces of Tamil admixture, especially the women; what poor ornaments they wore, their clothing, and even [177] their very names were Tamil; and so were their predilections if the coysmiles one or two of them bestowed on the fine Tamil that accompanied us signified anything. There were at least three men, however, true to [142] Vedda type—short of stature, wild-eyed, with beardless face and up-standing frizzly hair.

411 They had no bows among them, except as playthings for the children, [524] but made us one as a memento and stained it with charcoal and *thimbiri* to give it the appearance of use.

342 The huts were fashioned of wattle and leaves, and thatched with dry [415] grass. Their domestic appointments comprised earthen pots, a wooden pestle and mortar, bark rope, and a deer skin or two.

262 Fruits, flowers, wild yams, honey, the flesh of animals, *kurrukhan* and maize formed their food. The meat they fancied most was that of [224] the langur and monitor lizard which they hunted with the lazy mongrels [231] that loitered about. They eat abundantly and at any hour when food [264] is plentiful; but as a rule one good meal a day is all they expect; in times of dearth they bear hunger stoically, chewing incessantly a few [261] varieties of bark they carry in pouches fashioned of cloth saturated with [415] melted wax (*ilce reihee*). Partial nomads, they spend many months of the year under trees and in caves. Where the *palu*, *veera*, *kong*, or [221] *mora*† fruit is ripe, where the hives are, there they take their women and [222] children, dogs, and chattels and go.

515 "How often do you bathe?" I asked one of them, the smell of their ring-wormed bodies suggesting little acquaintance with water.

"What bathing for us," he replied. "We fall into a stream once in a way and get out again; that is our bath. And we only do that when our stomachs are full. When we are hungry we don't care for anything; we can eat even a man then!"

304 In answer to the question how they measured distances and what [276] constituted a mile, the reply was, "We walk till our legs hurt, then we place our axes on the ground, sit down, take out our pouches, and chew a quid; that is our mile".

[137]

\*A patch of forest cleared for cultivation

†*Eleusine coracana*

‡*Minusops hexandra*, *Hemicystia septaria*, *Schleichera trijuga*, *Nephotium longana*, respectively.

136 The grass in the glades was so tall that it covered us entirely. One's only chance of encountering game lay at the forest margins, or in the infrequent patches of burnt ground, overspread with the tender spicuous shoots of which the chital are fond. Parrots and doves broke the stillness of the evening with their crooning. Startled quails whirled from our feet crying vociferous caution to their crouching young, and sometimes we would flush a *pathan kumbula*, a species of partridge. But the note that accorded most with the brooding genius of the place, was the mournful, incessant 'ho-ho, ho-ho' of the *botua-hapan*, a cuckoo which, try as we might, we failed to see.

361 The next morning, provided with a small langur we shot on the way, we visited the Henebedde Veddas in their homes. Handuna's hut stood at the foot of a densely wooded hill. There were a few cattle about which the Veddas tended for a consideration from the Sinhalese; and, what was even more unexpected, we found here a couple of hens with excellent broods; for, even the Sinhalese of these parts, as we learnt to our cost, kept no fowls. In these pursuits lie the nuclei that bid fair to tie nomadic hunters to fixed abodes.

342 Handuna's hut was a long low structure of wattle and bast thatched with straw, and partitioned into three or four dark rooms, occupied by his family and those of his sons-in-law. At one end of the building was an open living-room in which we were entertained with deer skins for seats. [281] Slung from the eaves, at the other end of the hut, was a gourd, the mouth [352] of which was plugged with wax pierced with two small holes, through 231 which bees busily entered and emerged. As I focussed my camera on this interesting example of Vedda apiculture, the enterprising showman naively remarked that a gentleman had once given him a rupee for that picture; but he might have spared the hint for the good it brought him.

343 Standing a little apart from the main hut, was a squat, kennel-like structure for the segregation of women, during their monthly indisposition. This feature is universal among jungle folk, whether Vedda, [347] half-Vedda, Sinhalese, or Tamil. These sheds, barely sufficient for an [177] individual to sit or lie crouched in, are often overgrown by jungle, and only crudely protected with bark-slats or deer skins; they have a fire-place at the open entrance; sometimes they are more hygienically built over trellises. Considering the poor protection they afford, and their nearness to the forest around, it must require some fortitude on the part of those occupying them, especially at night.

252 We now saw the monkey we had brought prepared for food. A slow fire was kindled in the garden; on this the carcase was placed, and turned over until well singed, emitting a most appetising odour. The smooth stone on which Handuna had up to now been seated, and which did service as seat or platter as occasion demanded, was requisitioned; the half-roasted animal was placed on it, disemboweled, and quartered with the blade of an arrow. A dog, that had been awaiting the opportunity, feasted on the offal in full view. The head was severed and split in half, the limbs, dismembered, and the trunk broken flat. The various fragments were then put back to roast. When all was ready, dainty morsels were served out to us on broad *kenda*\* leaves (the usual plates of these people), with the polite request that we must eat first. A fragment of liver done to a turn, and a dainty hand with the charred little fingers

\**Macaranga tomentosa*.